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ABSTRACT

Since 1992, Britain's Further Education Unit (FEU) has sponsored a series of projects, including two conferences and a number of case studies, to identify refugees' education and training needs and explore appropriate curriculum and accreditation of refugees who have professional qualifications. The projects established the following: (1) unlike most settled minority groups in Britain, refugees are often academically overqualified for lower-graded jobs but lack the language skills and work experience for high-level management positions; (2) in addition to requiring education and training, refugees entering further education (FE) require special English language support, guidance and counseling, assessment of prior experience, and work experience; and (4) individuals responsible for developing FE programs for refugees must consider organizational, eligibility, requalification/conversion, funding, and other factors limiting eligibility for and access to FE. Actions that the FEU can take to address the identified problems in providing refugees with the education and training they need for employment were identified. (Appended are names/addresses of organizations and publications concerned with refugee education and training and a list of the 10 organizations providing case studies.) (MN)

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Refugee Education & Training

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Refugee Education & Training

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1. INTRODUCTION

A recent, but still unpublished study by the Home Office on the Settlement of Refugees in Britain observed that most refugees arriving in this country were from urban areas and 'well educated, over a third having at least started a university course, and nearly half having had some further education after school. These proportions were even higher for the men than they were for the women. Two-thirds had held jobs in their home countries, over 60 per cent of them being managers or business people.'

However, the unemployment rate among those living here was almost 60 per cent, higher than that experienced by ethnic minorities generally in the UK. So it was no surprise that 'when refugees were asked what advice they would give to new arrivals, more said, "Learn English" than anything else (nearly 40 per cent), while the third most frequent response to the same question was "Get on training or education courses so that you can get a job".'

This report describes the main problem areas in refugee education and training, and proposes strategies that the further education (FE) sector could adopt to tackle them.

It brings together the issues raised in two FEU-sponsored projects on refugee education and training. The reports were developed in response to the HMI report *Bilingual Adults in Education and Training* (1992) and concerns expressed by the Refugee Education, Training and Employment Forum (RETEF). In 1992 Bournville College, Birmingham formulated a project, part-funded by FEU, to explore appropriate curriculum support and accreditation of refugees who have overseas professional qualifications. Many of the findings are applicable across a broader range of refugees as well as other client groups. They may be applicable to FE in general..

Following this, FEU set up a further project in May 1993, designed to:

i) identify examples of existing practice in the provision of education and training for refugees;

ii) consult with practitioners to identify key factors facilitating or prohibiting such provision in order to inform the work of FEU, other organisations and policy makers;

iii) provide information and guidance to the FE sector in the planning and implementation of provision for refugees.

To achieve these aims, FEU consulted a number of organisations, including the World University Service (WUS) and the Refugee Council, and sponsored two seminars, one in London and the other in Birmingham. These were attended by about 100 delegates from FE, refugee organisations and other agencies concerned with education and training, including the FEFC. All institutions taking part were invited to submit reports of their work with refugees. A number of case studies were commissioned from education and training providers, including two from refugee organisations, one from an adult education centre and one from a consortium of four FE colleges.

This report is essentially a synthesis of the outcomes of the Bournville College and FEU projects. The views of interested organisations and individuals have been reflected and, as far as possible, recent developments in the FE sector have been taken into account.

FEU is grateful to all who have contributed to this report. In particular, thanks are due to the main author, Inder Gera, and to Geoff Bateson, from Birmingham LEA, the author of the original Bournville report. Any enquiries about matters arising from this report should be addressed to Dr Adjei Barwuah at FEU in London.

2. REFUGEES: CONTEXT AND DEFINITION

2.1 Background Information

In the aftermath of the Second World War an urgent need arose to co-ordinate the resettlement of the millions of people who had been displaced by the conflict. As a result, the United Nations' 'Convention on the status of refugees' was signed in 1951 and an internationally recognised definition of a refugee was proposed:

> 'Any person who, owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence, is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.'

The Convention also defined the obligations and responsibilities of the member states who signed and ratified it. They were charged with a duty not to return a refugee 'in any manner whatsoever to a country where his or her life or freedom would be threatened'. The responsibilities were additional to those in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was ratified in 1948. The UK government was signatory to both and played an active part in promoting them.

However, most of the countries which ratified the Convention have failed to live up to their obligations. In recent years, a number of factors have eroded the existing safeguards. In their search to harmonise asylum procedures, countries of the European Union have been adopting more restrictive measures. Refugees from the Third World tend increasingly to be perceived as economic migrants and this has led to them being shunted from one country to another.

2.2 Refugees in the UK

Because the terms of the Convention have been interpreted variously by different countries, different types of refugees are now recognised. In the United Kingdom, four categories are identified:

- Those defined by the 1951 United Nations Convention as having 'a well-founded fear of persecution' in their native country 'for reasons of race, religion, nationality or membership of a particular social group or political opinions'.
- Those who have applied for refugee status and are awaiting a decision. These individuals are often referred to as 'asylum seekers'.
- Those who have been refused refugee status but granted 'exceptional leave to remain'. Their right to stay has to be reviewed regularly up to a period of seven years, after which they are usually granted 'indefinite leave to remain'.
- Those with 'indefinite leave to remain'.

There are over 18 million refugees in the world today. Over 80 per cent are in Third World countries. Only five per cent have sought asylum in Europe, of whom the majority have settled in West Germany, France and the Scandinavian countries. Only a small proportion of those seeking asylum in Europe have come to Britain. It is estimated that about 140,000 refugees, of whom 85,000 are adults, live in the Greater London area. Over 5,000 are known to live in the Midlands, and there are smaller communities in most of the other major cities in the UK.

The source of new arrivals changed significantly between 1980 and 1992. Between 1982 and 1989, 20 per cent of asylum seekers were from Iran, 16 per cent from Sri Lanka, 12 per cent from Turkey and 25 per cent from Africa. By 1992, however, 64 per cent were coming from Africa (25 per cent from Angola and Zaire alone), 16 per cent from India and Pakistan, 13 per cent from Sri Lanka and seven per cent from Turkey.

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ASYLUM-SEEKERS IN EC COUNTRIES IN 1990

	Number	Per Thousand Population
Germany	193,000	3.16
France	56,000	1.04
UK	33,000	0.53
Netherlands	21,000	1.50
Belgium	13,000	1.30
Spain	8,000	0.21
Denmark	5,000	1.00
Italy	4,000	0.07
Greece	4,00	0.40

Source: World University Service (UK) 1992 Annual Report

2.3 Difference from settled minority groups

Although, under the 1951 Convention, refugees should be treated in the same way as the rest of the population, certain differences between refugees and other minority groups should be recognised.

Many refugees flee their homes in dramatic circumstances, and are ill prepared for life in a different culture and climate. Many come from countries which have no historic or colonial ties with Britain. There is, therefore, no settled immigrant community from their own country to offer them initial support and they find it difficult to understand the institutions to which they must relate.

Many refugees have ambivalent feelings about settling in Britain. This is compounded by their initial trauma, uncertainty about the political situation at home and their status in this country, and the difficulties they are likely to face in integrating into British society.

Because of the circumstances of their departure, many do not have evidence of their past experience and qualifications to present to an employer or educational institution. Because of extended periods of upheaval in their own country, many older refugees may not have worked for a long time, and younger ones may not have been able to complete their education.

Refugees from certain countries are often academically over-qualified for lower graded posts, yet have too little work or professional experience for high level management posts. They may also feel they are too far along their career path to switch careers.

Frequently refugees' language skills are not commensurate with their qualifications and they need intensive English language programmes to improve their employment chances.

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3. CURRICULUM ISSUES

The problems faced by most refugees — from the trauma of escape and relocation to lack of financial support — are closely inter-related and can seriously obstruct progress in education and training. Any decision on a curriculum for refugees will have to seek general progress on these problems to be successful. The driving force behind curriculum development, therefore, should be the cycle of planning and review based on overall strategic objectives and feedback from learner needs analysis. Any curriculum decisions, it should be noted, will have repercussions on institutional and staff development as well as resource allocations.

When refugees find themselves in FE — whether on GCSE, GCE A levels, vocational or Access courses — it is necessary to consider a number of elements of their provision in addition to the education/training programme itself. These include:

- education and training
- English language support
- guidance and counselling
- assessment of prior learning
- work experience.

3.1 Modularisation and networking

Important in this context is the issue of how quickly and easily the existing provision can be adapted to meet the needs of non-traditional learners, or the needs of groups participating for particular reasons. Despite a great deal of rhetoric to the contrary, many students find whole blocks of the education and training curriculum not widely accessible. Flexible approaches, such as APL, top-up or infill arrangements, are still too rare. Modularisation and curriculum networking would obviously be of value here.

While a modular approach to provision can create a lack of coherence, the problem can be minimised through strong curriculum management and adequate guidance. Certainly, for a number of client groups, including refugees, there is value in exploring the potential of more modularised provision linked with language support. In addition, the unitisation of qualification can help to partially qualify learners and also improve their chances of acquiring the necessary extra learning to complete the qualifying process.

Where an organisation is structured around assumptions of a primary target group (e.g. 16-19 full-time students) there will also be benefits in looking for collaborative arrangements with other local organisations. Local curriculum planning across a range of providers can increase the options for access and progression for refugees.

3.2 Curriculum design

Despite the practical difficulties that may arise with infill arrangements, holding refugees solely within discrete provision should be avoided where possible. The need for discrete targeted provision has arisen from the recognition that particular groups of students may not have been served adequately by mainstream provision. While refugees are likely to be included in this category, any discrete 'refugee-only' provision will need to have a clear educational basis which should include strategies for progression and integration.

Early difficulties can arise because of the structure of courses, or because of differences in learning styles. Because of past traditions, there may be an initial preference among refugees for more direct teaching styles and a sense that other methods do not have the same value or effectiveness. There may be times when domestic and personal issues take priority and sessions of a course are missed. Any of these factors can increase the likelihood of unsuccessful completion. Moves towards individualisation of learning, despite initial preferences, such as structured individual learning plans (ILPs), students moving at their own pace, a choice of learning modes backed by appropriate, direct tuition, can assist in reducing early frustration and potential non-completion.

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3.3 English language support

Refugees often need to improve English language skills rapidly in order to understand and deal with their immediate problems. A determining factor is usually whether or not English has been used as an official language in their country of origin. The immediate need for language support can vary from a general upgrading of skill and confidence in written and spoken English to an introduction to specific technical vocabularies at a high level of sophistication.

Many tutors of English speakers of other languages (ESOL) do not favour separate courses for refugees, maintaining that ESOL classes should be for all speakers of other languages, regardless of status. However, tensions may arise between the needs of refugees and those of other learners in terms of learning pace and appropriateness of content. As the languages of refugees may be different from those of settled ethnic minority groups, providers may need to train more bilingual staff to handle this diversity, despite budgetary constraints.

The educational profile of refugees may well be different from that more usually encountered in FE. Some may have high levels of professional education and be at least bilingual. The combination of these factors with a lack of English usage at a corresponding level is something of which educational organisations and professional bodies generally have little experience.

Successful providers, however, do share the following characteristics. They:

- initially offer English at a level appropriate to individual need;
- recognise the educational profile of refugees beyond their skills in English;
- establish links with other local providers;
- draw on the traditions of English as a foreign language (EFL) and ESOL teaching in order to create English language provision suitable for all learners involved;
- reinforce the acquisition of English through other elements of the curriculum;
- link language teaching to social and cultural awareness;
- recognise that refugees may have a wide range of needs and be able to respond flexibly;
- define language support as part of an entitlement;
- provide appropriate training for English language support;
- provide training for reception and administrative staff and subject teachers on such issues as refugee entitlement and fees policy.

3.4 Guidance and counselling

In the initial stages, refugees need advice and information about their rights within the educational system and the choices open to them in order to take informed decisions about entering employment or FE and training.

Guidance and counselling services should aim to improve the self-confidence of refugees by helping them to understand their new situation, which, in turn, will enable them to draw up, and act upon, realistic personal action plans. Bilingual advisers who understand cross-cultural issues are of particular importance here.

3.5 The assessment of prior learning (APL)

APL has been developed since the early 1980s, mainly to assist adults to recognise what they have learned and to use it for progression. It is seen as one way of accelerating the acquisition of nationally recognised qualifications across a broad spectrum of the workforce. APL has two main strands:

i) enabling adults to reflect on their prior learning achievements and recognise them as valuable. This can provide increased motivation to undertake further learning, facilitate guidance activities and make participants more aware of accessible opportunities;

ii) providing evidence in ways that match achievements to the assessment requirements of particular qualifications. This enables participants to claim credit for units of accreditation or obtain exemptions from particular course requirements.

The latter strand could prove very useful in integrating refugees into the education system, since it could be applied to the three main client groups within the refugee population:

- those with academic qualifications;
- those with vocational qualifications;
- those with no formal qualifications but assessable competence.

Many colleges recognise that refugees bring a wealth of knowledge and experience which can help meet skills shortages within the UK economy. As a result, they offer upskilling and re-orientation courses. Colleges that have been successful at this share the following characteristics:

- they are clear about the purposes of APL: placing students on appropriate courses, gathering information for accreditation or recording prior experiences and knowledge for confidence building;
- they recognise the potential complexity and cost of APL and create a service which is straightforward and cost-effective;
- they are sensitive to the differing personal situations of each refugee;
- they work closely with other agencies and have access to appropriate databases, e.g. those detailing foreign qualifications;
- they help students to make informed decisions about their future by setting realistic targets;
- they offer advice, particularly where refugees have lost records of prior qualification;
- they employ a variety of strategies to assess prior learning, including work experience, monitoring and placements.

Although certain types of academic qualification gained abroad can be evaluated and recognised in the UK, the majority of education institutions and professional bodies expect those with overseas qualifications to start again. As a result, refugees face numerous problems in practising their professions in this country and many end up in jobs which are well below their ability and expertise. Professional and trade bodies may also be unintentionally restrictive and inflexible in protecting their members' interests.

There are other possibilities which move beyond APL at college or national level. They include:

- using the 'correspondent university system' that establishes direct links between institutions and which has been operating for a long time between British universities and universities in former colonies;
- using methods developed by formal bodies such as the Association of Commonwealth Universities in assessing qualifications;
- negotiating with other European Union countries regarding parity and equivalence of qualifications;
- the establishment by professional bodies of common criteria for comparing qualifications.

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- the establishment of a qualifications ombudsman to oversee fairness in assessment.

These should result in the development of a credit transfer system that:

- identifies equivalences in overseas qualifications;
- lists additional requirements for certain qualifications;
- creates a credit exemption scheme;
- provides guidelines for negotiating credit exemptions for prior learning;
- gives guidelines on access to the system as well as providing advocacy assistance;
- classifies relevant information for use by guidance services and education/training providers.

3.6 Work experience

The benefits of an insight into the world of work as an aid to education and qualification are well recognised. This has moved beyond traditional work experience to take in a wider range of options, including work-shadowing, project work and meetings with fellow professionals. Quality work experiences of this kind are seen as an integral part of the whole curriculum and are of particular value to refugees. They:

- aid confidence building by putting refugees back within their own area of professional expertise;
- provide supervision for refugees in work situations, thus enabling them to obtain references and testimonials;
- provide time for reflection, allowing individuals to review their interest in a particular professional area;
- create the possibility of gaining, through workplace tasks, unit credits that can be given recognition by accrediting bodies;
- provide opportunities for exposure to the structure and style of work in a British setting;
- create the opportunity to gain inside knowledge of permanent work opportunities.

Work placements allow previous overseas working experience to be given credit within the context of British employment situations. To do this, the recording of outcomes from these placements needs to be systematic. Many employers will need some preparation for full participation in this assessment and colleges may have to work closely with them to achieve this.

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4. ACCESS AND ENTITLEMENT TO FE

4.1 General entitlements

There is no centrally planned and co-ordinated policy or programme for refugee settlement in the UK. Thus, the experiences of refugees regarding their settlement and welfare may differ from one area to another depending on the policies and resources of the respective local authority.

In spite of this, certain rights and entitlements are available to refugees in this country. Access to these rights and entitlements varies with each category of refugee.

Under current rules and regulations, a refugee's general and employment rights and entitlements may be summarised as follows:

ENTITLEMENT	REFUGEE STATUS	EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE TO REMAIN	ASYLUM SEEKERS
NHS	Yes	Yes	Yes
SOCIAL SERVICES	Yes	Yes	Yes
SCHOOLS	Yes	Yes	Yes
HOUSING FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE	Yes	Yes	So far, yes, but new restrictions are expected as part of the forthcoming Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act
WELFARE RIGHTS: income support, social fund, child benefit, housing benefit	Yes, but required to sign on and be available for work	Yes, but required to sign on and be available for work	Receive 90 per cent income support
PERMISSION TO WORK	Yes	Yes	Six months after applying for asylum

Table 1. General and employment entitlement of refugees

The financing of refugee education and training involves a number of agencies including:

- Local education authorities (LEAs)
- Training and enterprise councils (TECs)
- Non-governmental agencies (NGOs)

The influence of LEAs is generally exercised through the discretionary grant system under which local authorities, at their discretion, can support students by paying tuition fees and/or maintenance grants. The number of such grants has been significantly reduced in recent years and some authorities have stopped giving them altogether.

TECs have been able to influence education through their involvement in work-related further education (WRFE). NGOs are usually voluntary and their support for refugee education will depend on the availability of funding and on set criteria under which individual cases merit consideration.

The education and training entitlements of refugees are summarised in Table 2 (overleaf).

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STUDYING AND IMMIGRATION STATUS FOR ADULTS	No Home Office conditions and no limits on hours of study		
HOME RATE FEES FOR FULL-TIME COURSES	Yes, in some cases (an exception originally introduced by the Inner London Education Authority but not applied by all colleges)		Not until the three years' residence criterion is fulfilled
MANDATORY AWARDS FOR HE AND STUDENT LOANS	Yes	Not until the three years' residence criterion is fulfilled	Not until the three years' residence criterion is fulfilled
STUDYING FULL-TIME ON INCOME SUPPORT	No, except where one is considered to be unavailable for work (e.g. caring for very young children). Also full-time ESOL courses for up to nine months if commenced within 12 months of arriving in the UK	No	No
STUDYING PART-TIME ON INCOME SUPPORT	Up to 21 hours per week	Up to 21 hours per week while available for work	In courses defined as part-time by college
GOVERNMENT TRAINING SCHEMES	Yes	Yes	Six months after applying for asylum (on request)

Table 2. Education/training entitlement for refugees

4.2 Entitlements within colleges

There is no defined entitlement for refugees in FE colleges. However, many recognise that, at least in certain parts of the country, refugees do present bulk demand for FE and, at a time when the national agenda includes increasing participation, steps need to be taken to respond effectively to this demand.

Consequently, FE colleges have recognised the need to mitigate some of the hardships faced by refugees by improving their access to education and training. A specific example is the common commitment made by the colleges of Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark and Woolwich. They have pledged to:

- facilitate access onto appropriate provision and the removal of any barriers;
- remove unnecessary financial obstacles to study in the colleges;
- make funds available to support specific cases of hardship;
- provide suitable counselling and pastoral care including, where possible, access to interpreters;
- provide and resource language and learning support, thereby enabling refugees to benefit from the course of their choice.

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- provide a safe college environment which will not tolerate racism, discrimination and harassment;
- recognise and attempt to meet cultural and religious needs;
- seek to open up progression routes into FE, training and development;
- raise the awareness of all staff to the specific difficulties which refugees face.

4.3 Full-Time Study

Financing full time study in FE is beyond the reach of most refugees because they are defined as 'overseas students' for the purposes of fees, awards and regulations. While a minority with refugee status are entitled to pay home student fees and receive mandatory grants for HE, the majority have to have three years' ordinary residence in the UK before they become eligible for a mandatory grant.

LEAs which offer discretionary awards require the applicants to be resident for a specific period in the area which they cover. However, refugees may have to move frequently in order to find suitable accommodation, thus making it difficult to satisfy LEA residency requirements.

Other developments concerning the financing of full time study, such as student loans, the increase in home student fees and the withdrawal of income support and housing benefits from full-time students, are likely to further reduce refugees' access, particularly to HE.

4.4 Part-Time Study

Financing part-time study is also difficult. Because of the impact of DFE and DSS regulations, the majority of refugees study on a part-time basis while claiming income support. There is, however, no identifiable funding available to assist those on part-time courses. The cost of books, dictionaries, child care etc. are usually beyond the means of a group who live at or below subsistence level and have no access to alternative financial support. The needs of asylum seekers are particularly acute since they receive ten per cent less income support than others. In the last three years this situation has become more severe as a result of regular increases in even the concessionary level fees in most institutions.

Some colleges have begun to define 21-hour courses as full-time in order to receive more funding per student from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). This means that refugee students who currently benefit from the 21-hour concession have to face the choice of giving up the course or losing benefit, neither of which they wish to do. In some colleges, any course of 15 hours or more per week is considered full-time, but in others courses of up to 21 hours per week remain defined as part-time. This is obviously preferable since it is in line with DSS regulations and enables refugees to study without losing benefit.

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4.5 Training Programmes

In areas of high settlement of refugees, voluntary agencies are able to attract funds from the local TEC, the European Social Fund, the Employment Service and the Home Office (section 11). As far as employment and training services are concerned, the refugee population can be mapped out initially on the basis of three broad factors:

- existing level of vocational knowledge and skills in a particular occupational area;
- capacity to compete in the job market as determined by level of communication skills, self-confidence and familiarity with the UK labour market;
- level of literacy and numeracy.

Because of the nature of funding, training providers are, by and large, restricted to providing training only to those refugees who are eligible for government training and employment schemes (Training for Work, Traineeships, Restart, Job Review Workshops) and who have good communication skills. This system works well for those who need job search skills or vocational training in particular vocational areas, or who want to equip themselves with basic generic skills before acquiring specialist skills and work experience in their job area. However, these schemes are not able to provide intensive and extended English language training for those with little or no English.

Some TECs are trying to be flexible in response to this difficulty, but their own funding depends on achieving certain outputs. Better funding for higher qualifications can work against the interests of those who need to climb the lower rungs first.

4.6 ESOL

Colleges and refugee organisations consulted agree that appropriate provision of ESOL is of the utmost importance. Refugees want to acquire English language skills as quickly as possible as they believe that this will help sort out their immediate problems and convince others that they have other skills.

Unfortunately there is no planned programme of English language training available to refugees in Britain, nor any statutory obligation to provide it. Indeed, a number of factors militate against refugees receiving suitable English language tuition.

- Under the current FEFC funding methodology for colleges, ESOL provision does qualify for guaranteed funding and it is expected that access to the facility for refugees will be greatly improved in the future. However, the present situation is that the provision of ESOL is under-resourced and patchy. Courses are concentrated in adult education institutes, where they are subject to fluctuations in funding. In FE colleges there are long waiting lists, large classes and intense competition for places. Local provision, inadequate as it is, is shrinking. Financial pressure and FE incorporation are encouraging colleges to make mainstream educational obligations a priority at the expense of resource-intensive provision like ESOL and community provision in adult education services.
- Obtaining information about the availability of ESOL courses is not easy. Refugees are not a homogeneous group and providing appropriate interpreters and translated materials to cope with diverse individual demand entails obvious difficulties. A recognised national system is needed to provide such help within a reasonable time.
- Poverty serves as a barrier to learning English. Refugees who are fortunate enough to find suitable ESOL classes are often prevented from attending by lack of money and related problems. No local authority or other statutory grants are available for ESOL courses, though some actual provision is free.
- Many refugees are directed to inappropriate basic English courses. There is a shortage of intensive, purpose-designed English language courses for refugees intending to go into HE. Moreover, the majority of colleges offering mainstream courses to refugees do not provide sufficient English language support.

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5. FACTORS LIMITING ACCESS TO FE

The practical issues regarding refugee education and training that should engage the attention of FE providers fall under four main headings:

5.1 Organisational

- Refugees arrive throughout the year and providers should recognise that the rigid September-July academic year will not always be appropriate to their needs.
- There is a lack of interpreters in ethnic minority languages at college entry points, as well as inadequate translations of course information. Coupled with lack of appropriate advice and counselling, this often means that refugees are guided onto unsuitable courses, which may be too slow, non-accredited and provide no avenue for progression. This is a major criticism of FE provision by refugee community groups and frequently leads to frustration and drop-out. As retention becomes an important funding criterion, refugees may be selected out at these entry points.
- Inappropriate entry-tests for courses tend to exclude refugees. This is particularly worrying in practical/vocational areas where poorly designed tests may lead to exclusion on the grounds of 'inadequate English', although successful outcomes of NVQs, for example, are increasingly based on competencies which can be demonstrated without written tests.
- Application forms designed only for UK school-leavers make it difficult for refugees to present themselves well.
- The same system of quality assurance in the delivery and development of the whole curriculum should be used in assessing the quality of programmes designed specifically for refugees.
- Recording and monitoring refugee enquiries, enrolments, retention and outcomes are crucial in compiling statistics to inform the curriculum and to support a case for funding.
- Lack of support services is a major factor in limiting access to both full-time and part-time courses.
- The location of entry-level courses is important as refugees receive only 90 per cent of standard income support and cannot afford transport costs to distant college sites.
- Fees have always been an important issue to refugees because residency requirements for concessionary fees are problematic. Incorporation and the recent decision by some London colleges not to charge fees on certain courses as a strategy for attracting more learners seem to have minimised this problem, but there are doubts about how long such fee levels can be maintained.
- Refugees trying to cope with resettlement often have poor class attendance rates compared to other students because a lot of time is spent on sorting out problems related to their situation, e.g. interviews with the Department of Social Security, Unemployment Benefit offices, solicitors, not to mention occasionally serving as interpreters for other refugees.

5.2 Eligibility

Eligibility for refugees to some courses is an issue, because:

- Training for Work courses require that refugees be resident in the UK for six months prior to joining courses and that they apply for restrictions on employment to be lifted by the Home Office. Since many asylum seekers fear that such a request will prejudice the outcome of their application for refugee status, they may opt not to pursue FE.
- Asylum-seekers and those with Exceptional Leave to Remain must reside in the UK for at least three years before becoming eligible for local authority grants.
- Funding of some courses depends on residency (Task Force and City Challenge are examples). Refugees often have little control over where they live and are likely to be in temporary accommodation and, therefore, subject to frequent residential relocation.

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5.3 Requalification/conversion

- This is not a major problem in FE, where paper qualifications are not always a requirement for access to courses. However, more provision in this area will provide better progression prospects for professionally and academically qualified refugees. Even though it is relatively easy to obtain equivalencies of many non-UK academic qualifications through the National Academic Recognition Information Centre, the expense involved (paying for notarised translation of certificates and other relevant documents) seems to discourage refugees from using the facility. More important, many refugees will not have been able to bring documentation with them nor obtain it subsequently. Very few non-UK qualifications are recognised by UK professional bodies, who also demand that refugees take lengthy and expensive conversion courses (e.g. Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB) for doctors of medicine). The Bournville College project is a possible model of good practice. Its 12-week curriculum comprises elements such as work placement, English language support, counselling and guidance. It is an identifiable facility within the college, where overseas qualifications can be assessed and validated. however, such programmes are rare in FE.

- APL/APEL would appear to be ideal route for refugees, but development is still at an early stage and not widely recognised, even within FE colleges which offer the service. There are also exceptional problems of providing documentation of qualifications and experience for portfolio building.

- There is very little provision for recognising technical qualifications. This should be a speciality of the FE sector, especially with introduction of NVQs. However, students are generally expected to take rigid, one or two-year courses in order to gain accreditation in areas like Construction, Motor Vehicle, Electronics, etc. Most vocational courses require written assessments, and many refugees are less likely to succeed because of their lack of English language proficiency. Some colleges are exploring the possibility of an entirely competency-based assessment scheme (NVQs) for their Motor Vehicles City and Guild courses, and this could prove advantageous to refugee students.

5.4 Funding regimes

The most significant factor excluding refugees from FE is the failure to develop a co-ordinated national programme of appropriate education and training. Funding is piecemeal and inadequate and depends increasingly on meeting Government targets of accreditation and employment-related outcomes which are often remote from refugees' immediate education and training needs.

- A sizeable proportion of refugees present FE providers with additional problems not associated with non-refugee learners, e.g. low levels of language proficiency, lack of familiarity with the education system. These problems need addressing before refugee learners can take full and successful advantage of the FE offer. FEFC funding methodology, though supporting ESOL and Access courses, emphasises numbers enrolled, retained and achieving successful outcomes. With most refugee students successful retention and successful outcomes are likely to be be highly influenced by additional learner and teacher support offered, e.g. extra language courses, advice and guidance. These have extra resource implications for colleges, and FEFC funding does not fully recognise individual learner needs. Colleges may not have the resources to meet such needs and would not, therefore, find it advisable to target refugees.

- Funding sources like the European Social Fund (ESF) include refugees and migrants, but require matched funding by FE institutions. These arrangements are difficult to administer and have unrealistic criteria based on non-existent employment opportunities. FE institutions also have residency requirements which may exclude newly-arrived asylum-seekers and other displaced groups and individuals.

- Under Section 210 of the Education Reform Act, 1988, funding is limited to 'those who are for the time being resident in a camp or other accommodation or establishment provided for refugees or for displaced or similar persons'. The accommodation should be provided exclusively for displaced persons. Thus, unless an FE institution has a refugee hostel located within its catchment area, it is unlikely that it will be able to obtain funding for refugee-oriented programmes.

- Some TEC funding may actually discriminate against refugees, especially in areas where foundation courses for bilingual students are only funded if accreditation is below NVQ level 1 (e.g. City and Guilds Wordpower Foundation Level).

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6. FE RESPONSES TO IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS

It is expected that individual colleges will identify problems peculiar to refugees resident in their catchment areas and respond to these problems within the context of their mission statements and strategic plans. However, the issues raised by refugees do appear to have some universal application and it is in this spirit that the response proposals below are offered.

6.1 Organisational

- Increasing use should be made of modularisation of provision, unitisation of qualifications, fast-track ESOL and roll-on/roll-off courses. This will enable refugees to take up courses within a reasonable time after entering the country. (See FEU publications *A Basis for Credit?* and *Discussing Credit*.)
- The inclusion of substantial bilingual support in enrolment and counselling provision will minimise the mis-placement of refugees on courses.
- Informed admissions procedures will seek to minimise the potential for discrimination against refugees.
- The development of a monitoring system will ensure high quality and adequate provision for refugees.
- Good and adequate support services, including childcare facilities, should be provided.
- Distance travelled to courses is a particular issue for refugees. Courses should be located in accessible locations.
- A sensitive and considerate fee policy should be introduced.
- Flexibility in timetabling should be encouraged for refugees.

6.2 Eligibility and funding

A review of the eligibility rules for refugees is necessary to enable all categories of refugees to be funded to undertake the education and training necessary for their survival and for improving their life chances.

Prioritisation and other forms of internal distribution of resources should be used to provide refugee-oriented programmes with a view to improving access, retention and achievement of refugees. FE colleges could provide re-orientation/resettlement courses which would enhance the curriculum for refugees. Information and training in a variety of areas — using the health service, welfare rights and entitlements, immigration/asylum advice, legal support, local area familiarisation, education system etc. — would support effective resettlement and free students to concentrate on their chosen fields of study.

7. SUMMARY AND OBSERVATIONS

This report highlights a number of issues that need to be addressed to improve access to education and training for refugees.

Who are refugees?

The term 'refugee' is used in this report to include:

i) persons who answer to the definition of the United Nations Convention (1951) as having a 'well-founded fear' of persecution in their native country;

ii) persons who have applied for refugee status (asylum seekers);

iii) persons who have been granted 'exceptional leave to remain';

iv) persons who have been granted 'indefinite leave to remain'.

The report recognises that, even though the specific educational and training needs of groups and individual refugees may be different, there are commonalities upon which general policy and specific actions could be based.

General policy considerations

National

There are two main issues that need considering at the national level:

- The institution of a well-developed policy on the education and training of refugees, including the identification of a set of educational requirements aimed at providing fair access to effective education and training as part of a resettlement package;

- The establishment of a framework for the recognition of overseas qualifications and for the accreditation of refugees' prior learning.

FE sector

There is a need for a well-developed policy at a national level on the education and training of refugees, including the identification of a set of educational entitlements aimed at providing fair access to effective education and training as part of a resettlement package.

- Notwithstanding the lack of a national policy on refugee education entitlement, there should be a cross-sector, co-operative effort on issues such as student eligibility, fee levels and ESOL provision. Such co-operation can help reduce waste, inconvenience and misunderstanding on these issues and also spur the development of a formula for incorporating the prior skills and expertise of refugees in their education and training programmes.

- Considering that a consensus exists within the sector regarding unmet education and training needs of refugees, the 'common commitment' approach of the colleges of Lambeth, Southwark and Woolwich is worth emulating across the sector.

Advice to colleges

Individual colleges have the responsibility of promoting maximum access to their education and training provision to all learners in their catchment areas. Colleges should therefore consider every possible means of ensuring maximum and equitable access for refugees to education and training.

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Colleges should:

- be familiar with the characteristics of the refugee populations in their areas;
- develop a consultative relationship with refugee organisations as a means of gaining information and insight regarding refugee education and training needs;
- develop liaison with local authorities and DSS offices with a view to minimising the difficulties faced by refugees which are related to the operations of these organisations (e.g. benefits, housing etc.);
- set up enrolment procedures that make it possible for refugees to enter FE at other times besides set enrolment periods;
- provide 'orientation' courses on welfare rights and entitlements, housing, British institutions, way of life, etc. as part of a learner support programme;
- organise study skills programmes for refugees to familiarise them with new and different learning and teaching styles;
- provide both pre- and on-course advice and counselling;
- provide language support for refugees across mainstream courses;
- educate key staff and reception personnel about refugee issues so that they can develop the appropriate sensitivity to the special problems of refugees as a learner group;
- provide child care and other learner support aimed at improving access to education for female refugees;
- establish regular review systems to enable refugees to assess their performance and discuss progression;
- provide refugees with sufficient information to facilitate their participation in and enrichment of the daily life and culture of the institution.

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8. APPENDIX

8.1 Addresses

The Refugee Council
3 The Bondway,
London SW8 1SJ
Tel: 071-582 6922

Refugee Education and Training Advisory Service
World University Service (UK)
20 Compton Terrace,
London N1 2UN
Tel: 071-226 6747

Refugee Training and Employment Centre
240-250 Ferndale Road,
London SW9 8BB
Tel: 071-737 1155

8.2 Publications

Refugees: Unlocking the Potential
Training Enterprise and Education Directorate,
Moorfoot,
Sheffield

Careers Guidance with Refugees (£9.85)
Tony Marshall,
Refugee Training and Employment Centre

Training and Employment Provision for Refugees in Europe (no longer available)
Refugee Council

Refugee Education Handbook (£10 for voluntary organisations; £20 for statutory organisations)
World University Service

Refugee Education Policy for the 1990s
World University Service

The Settlement of Refugees in Britain (unpublished)
Home Office

8.3 Organisations which provided the case studies

World University Service (UK)
Northern Refugee Centre, Sheffield
Refugee Training and Employment Centre
Bournville College

Consortium of London Colleges:
Lewisham College
Woolwich College
Southwark College
Lambeth College

South Norwood Adult Education Centre

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